SAINT PAUL DISTRICT COUNCILS 2012 ANNUAL REPORT



More than 1,000 Dayton's Bluff (District 4) community members participate in the Night Out on E. 7th Street Business Fair.

Summit Hill Association (District 16) neighbors form a contingent as part of the Grand Old Day Parade.

During 2012, Saint Paul District Councils:

Worked with more than **2,000** volunteers on behalf of Saint Paul neighborhoods, including more than **500** volunteers serving as district council board and committee members.

Fielded more than 14,500 phone requests from residents.

Worked with more than **3,000** neighbors visiting district council offices.

Organized and maintained more than 400 block clubs.

Made recommendations to the city on more than **220** zoning and licensing issues.

Helped involve more than **30,000** community members in National Night Out activities.

Coordinated participation by more than **3,000** community members in neighborhood cleanups.

Participated in parades and festivals attended by more than **29,000** community members.

Coordinated a wide variety of other community-based events, including Thanksgiving shopping for families in need, business fairs, workshops on new business development and environmental issues, neighborhood house tours, garage sales and meetings on issues of concern to communities.

Provided more than **10,000** community members with electronic information updates about neighborhood issues and events, on average, once every three weeks.

Provided more than **130,000** community members with mailed newsletters, on average about three times per year.

Each district council is an independent nonprofit taxexempt 501-c-3 neighborhood-based organization that receives funding from the City of Saint Paul, as well as other sources, including Minnesota-based foundations, business/ institutional sponsorships, regional/state government and individual donations.

About District Councils

Saint Paul's 17 neighborhood groups or district councils have been working more than 35 years to make a positive difference through community involvement. As independent nonprofit organizations, district councils ensure community participation in Saint Paul's planning and decision making processes.

Each district council provides advisory recommendations to city officials on physical, economic, and social development issues. District councils also identify neighborhood needs, initiate community programs, and recruit and nurture neighborhood leaders and volunteers.

Inside the 2013 Annual Report

The next pages provide information on district councils' work in 2012 on the issues of community building, community gardens, composting/recycling and transportation. Also highlighted are examples of district council work in-depth:

St. Anthony Park's Pop-Up Shop (District 12)

Dayton's Bluff's Make It Happen on East 7th Initiative (District 4)

Hamline Midway (District 11) and Frogtown's (District 7) Charles Avenue Project

For more information on district councils, visit www.stpaul.gov/districtcouncil



Community Building

District Councils build community by deepening social connections and supporting problem-solving and leadership skills. Examples include:

District 6 Planning Council partnered with the Minnesota Council of Churches to translate crime prevention materials into the Karen language helping the refugee and asylee community.

Summit-University Planning Council (District 8) brought over 100 people together to "popup" art-infused events inspiring them to reimagine uses for abandoned spaces and take urban development into their own hands.



Community Gardens

Many district councils organize community gardens to provide fresh produce, green space, promote exercise, improve diets and promote interactions. Examples include:

District 2 Community Council connects diverse ethnic groups--gardeners at one site speak seven languages--but all speak the language of gardening.

Highland District Council's (District 15) HGRO added flowers, a peace garden, benches and held a plant share to raise funds for the Hillcrest Rec and Highland Park Library.

Summit Hill Association (District 16) organized individual plots and community-supported agriculture (CSA) in their garden so residents can either garden or purchase shares of garden harvests.



St. Anthony Park Pop-Up Shop

by Amy Sparks, Executive Director, St. Anthony Park Community Council (District 12)

The District 12 collaboration with the Starling Project turned the empty storefronts on University Avenue into an asset: places that can become home to "meanwhile" uses, allowing local artists and entrepreneurs space to try an idea in the short or long term. Creating a Pop-Up Shop in the neighborhood was a way to support a strong local economy, create a unique sense of place and celebrate local talent. Additionally, we expected that the attention, energy and activity that these tenants would bring would support existing businesses and property owners in the present and encourage development in the future.

For three months, the community council rented a storefront on University Avenue and then sublet it to nine different individuals and organizations to use for one to four weeks. The renters were artists, designers, arts organizations, and enterprising individuals. The tenants, who used the storefront in a variety of ways, brought new people to the neighborhood, exposed residents to sometimes unconventional but always engaging art and generated a great deal of positive publicity for the neighborhood. The Pop-Up Shop proved to both landlords and tenants that really short term rentals are possible and positive.

After the whirlwind of the three month lease was up, the property owner asked us to extend our stay, which was a great victory. Although we didn't continue, the good news was that the space was rented almost immediately after the Pop-Up Shop closed. The landlord allowed a shorter term lease than he would have before working with the Pop-Up Shop. The tenants are using the short-term lease to test a new business model and location; if the trial period is successful, they will move to a long-term lease. The St. Anthony Pop-Up Shop was a center of activity, excitement, innovation, and we were thrilled with the opportunity to collaborate with Starling. You can find information about creating a pop-up shop in your neighborhood by looking at the *Toolkit for Short-Term Rentals* at www.starlingproject.com.



Composting / Recycling

All 17 district councils hold cleanup days, distribute recycling information and bins. Several are also encouraging residents to compost and recycle organic materials:

Union Park District Council (District 13) organized a new composting initiative that included workshops on backyard and worm composting.

Macalester Groveland Community Council (District 14) introduced an organics recycling program with an organics recycling drop-off site to reduce trash by recycling materials not currently accepted curbside.



Transportation

Access to all forms of transportation – including transit, walking and bicycling – is an important part of livable neighborhoods. Many district councils focused on the new light rail line and the following district councils involved community members in other neighborhood-based transportation issues:

District I **Community Council** completed a neighborhood transportation plan and developed a safe routes plan.

West Side Community Organization (District 3) secured funds to increase community engagement in analyzing alternatives along South Robert Street.



Dayton's Bluff Does "Make It Happen"

by Deanna Foster, Executive Director, Dayton's Bluff Community Council (District 4)

2012 was a big year for Dayton's Bluff Community Council and the E. 7th Street business district. In January the Make it Happen on E. 7th Street Initiative was launched and 65 business/property owners located on E. 7th between Metropolitan State University and Beacon Bluff began a dialogue about seemingly insurmountable problems – constant litter, persistent graffiti, loitering and petty crimes, broken sidewalks, weeds, ineffective signage, decreasing property values, no property improvements and a lack of belief that anything could change for the better. East 7th Street needed attention and work; it seemed people had lost hope that things could change for the better.

We began with good old-fashioned organizing – getting people to talk with each other and facilitating the pathway to change. We began tackling graffiti and litter with a joint effort by business owners, volunteers, and city crews. Within a month we had visible results, and heads began turning.

Our growing partnership with businesses who donated money and time allowed us to attack the weeds and replace them with flowers along the entire stretch of the Make it Happen district. The St. Paul Public Works Department repaired sidewalks and painted tired fences; we used common interest in signage to support implementation of the new sign ordinance and improve effectiveness of all signage; business owners met to discuss crime; together the group concluded that they owed it to one another and the entire district to begin aggressive reporting of petty crimes.

The newfound hope and cooperative action culminated in the Night Out on E. 7th Street Business Fair held in August. Over 65 businesses brought their products and services out to greet over 1,000 people who walked the district and acquainted themselves with the local businesses. Many who attended have lived on the East Side for decades, but found numerous businesses they did not know were here. The Make it Happen District is a treasure trove of local business opportunity. The district is largely undiscovered, but soon will rise up to be, as one Night Out participant put it, "the hippest place in St. Paul."

Due to increased confidence in the district and growing interest in reinvestment in local businesses, Dayton's Bluff Community Council applied for and received \$500,000 in Neighborhood STAR funding for the Make it Happen District. Sixteen preliminary applications for assistance with projects planned were received this fall and the first projects will begin by year end. Watch for major changes on E. 7th Street in 2013!



Friendly Streets Initiative

by Michael Jon Olson, Executive Director, Hamline Midway Coalition (District 11)

On September 5, 2012, the Saint Paul City Council approved plans to transform Charles Avenue from Park to Aldine into a "Friendly Street" – one that is safe and inviting for all users, including local residents, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Once completed, the new Charles Avenue will feature traffic circles and other traffic calming measures, medians at major intersections to improve pedestrian and bike crossings, and signage and striping to mark Charles as a bikeway.

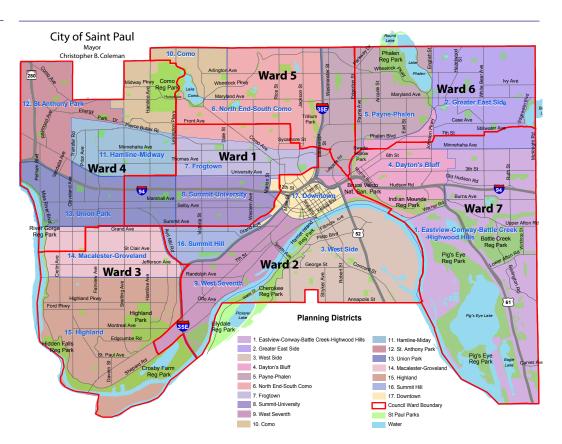
These changes reflect the thoughts of over 1,000 people who participated in developing a vision for the street. Through a series of events in 2011 and 2012 – including five block parties along Charles during the summer of 2011, presentations at neighborhood festivals, and two public meetings in July, 2012 – residents expressed overwhelming support for making Charles calmer, quieter, safer, and easier for bicyclists and pedestrians to use.

This broad public engagement effort was led by team of residents from Frogtown and Hamline Midway who began working together in the summer of 2010. The team initially formed to respond to the Bike Walk Central Corridor Action Plan which called for a bike boulevard along Charles Avenue. Supported by the Hamline Midway Coalition (District II) and the Frogtown Neighborhood Association (District 7), the team, which became the Friendly Street Initiative Working Group, educated residents about a wide array of street design options and developed the grassroots vision for Charles Avenue approved by the City Council.

The Charles Avenue Project (http://www.stpaul.gov/index.aspx?NID=4987) is only the first step in the Friendly Streets Initiative's broader effort to transform the neighborhoods of Saint Paul by tapping residents' genuine concern and care for their streets and the places they live. To learn more about the Friendly Streets Initiative, contact Michael Jon Olson, Executive Director, Hamline Midway Coalition at michaeljon@hamlinemidway.org.

For more information

Contact Diane Wanner, District Council Coordinator, Saint Paul City Council Research Office at 651-266-8572 or email her at Diane.Wanner@ci.stpaul.mn.us



Go to www.stpaul.gov/districtcouncil to find your district council.